



U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Western District of New York

Further inquiries: (716)843-5814

138 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, New York 14202

PROJECT EXILE PRESS RELEASE

September 25, 2003

RE: UNITED STATES v. TEQUILYNN K. LASTER
and
UNITED STATES v. BRUCE E. BROWN, JR.

United States Attorney Michael A. Battle and Niagara County District Attorney Matthew J. Murphy, III, jointly announced today that a Federal Grand Jury had returned two separate indictments under the Project Exile Program. In a two-count Indictment, the Grand Jury charged Tequilynn K. Laster, age 26, of 1311 22nd Street, Niagara Falls, New York, of two counts of unlawfully and knowingly possessing a firearm or ammunition, in that he had previously been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year. These charges are in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 922(g)(1) and are each punishable by a maximum period of incarceration of ten years, or a fine of \$250,000 or both. The Grand Jury also returned a four-count Indictment, charging Bruce E. Brown, Jr., age 27, of (1) unlawfully and knowingly possessing a firearm, in that he had previously been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 922(g)(1). This charge is punishable by a maximum period

of incarceration of ten years, or a fine of \$250,000 or both; (2) knowingly, intentionally, and unlawfully possessing with intent to distribute five grams or more of a mixture and substance containing cocaine base, a Schedule II controlled substance, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 841(a)(1). This charge is punishable by a mandatory minimum period of five years incarceration and a maximum period of forty incarceration and a \$2,000,000 fine or both; (3) knowingly, intentionally, and unlawfully possessing in excess of five grams of a mixture and substance containing cocaine base, a Schedule II controlled substance, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 844(a). This charge is punishable by a mandatory minimum period of five years of incarceration and a maximum of twenty years incarceration and a fine of \$250,000 or both; and (4) knowingly and unlawfully using and carrying a firearm during and in relation to a drug trafficking crime and possessing said firearm in furtherance of said drug trafficking crime. This charge requires a mandatory minimum period of five years incarceration that must be run consecutive to any other periods of incarceration.

It should be noted that the fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime . . . is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. (**Disciplinary Rule 7-107(B)(6)**).

United States Attorney Battle and Niagara County District Attorney Murphy noted that these cases arose and are part of the Project Exile Program. Project Exile involves a cooperative effort between the Niagara County District Attorney's Office and the United States Attorney's Office for the Western District of New York with regard to the

prosecution of firearms offenses. In instances where the prosecution of an alleged firearms offense would result in a potentially greater penalty if prosecuted federally, the Niagara County District Attorney's Office has agreed to cooperate with the United States Attorney's Office for the Western District of New York in the federal prosecution of such cases. The present Indictments are an example of such cooperation.

Assistant United States Attorney Richard P. Maigret stated that the Indictment against Tequilynn K. Laster charges the defendant with illegally possessing a quantity of ammunition on or about June 3, 2003, in the City of Niagara Falls, New York. The second count of the Indictment charges Mr. Laster with illegally possessing a loaded firearm on or about September 1, 2003, in Niagara Falls, New York. At the time, Mr. Laster was placed under arrest by Niagara Falls police officers with regard to an alleged shooting in Niagara Falls. However, as no firearm was found in his possession at that time, there were no appropriate New York State charges to be placed against him. The second count alleges that Mr. Laster was found in the possession of a loaded firearm on September 1, 2003. Mr. Laster had previously been convicted of a felony offense in the Niagara County Court at Lockport, New York.

Assistant United States Attorney Maigret also stated that the Indictment against Bruce E. Brown, Jr. charges that on August 8, 2003, in Niagara Falls, New York, the defendant was found in the possession of a loaded firearm and more than five grams of a mixture and substance containing cocaine base. Moreover, the Indictment charges that the defendant possessed the firearm in furtherance of such drug trafficking crimes

and used and carried the firearm during a drug trafficking crime. The Indictment also alleges that Brown was previously convicted of a felony.

Both of these investigations were conducted the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives from the Buffalo Field Office, under the direction of Resident Agent in Charge Dave DeJoe, and assisted by and in conjunction with members of the Niagara Falls Police Department, under the direction of Superintendent Christopher Carlin. Prosecution of these cases will be handled by Assistant United States Attorney Richard P. Maigret.

* * *